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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 INR-10 EUR-12 SS-15 CIAE-00 ICA-11
DODE-00 H-01 NSC-05 NSAE-00 HA-06 L-03 PM-09
PA-01 SSM-03 SAL-01 ACDA-12 SSN-02 SP-02 SPRS-02
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P 011246Z SEP 81
FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4488
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USLO RIYADH
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY FSchmelzer DATE 7/2/85
B( ) or XT( ) EXEMPTIONS
E.O. 12356 SEC. 3.3(b)(1) EXEMPTIONS
CLASS/SALE
DECLASSIFIED
FAC or FOI EXEMPTIONS

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE JIDDA 06022

E.O. 12065: N/A
TAGS: SA, PEPR, SCPN
SUBJECT: SAUDI REACTIONS TO ADVANCE NOTIFICATION OF AWACS - - SALE

1. PRESS COVERAGE OF THE AWACS ISSUE SINCE THE PRESIDENT'S ADVANCE NOTIFICATION TO CONGRESS HAS BEEN LARGELY CONFINED TO STRAIGHT NEWS REPORTING, MOSTLY FROM THE WIRE SERVICES. THE ISSUE INITIALLY RECEIVED FRONT PAGE TREATMENT, BUT ALL STORIES WERE BASICALLY THE SAME, WITH SOME BEING MORE DETAILED THAN OTHERS.

2. THE ONLY PUBLIC REACTION OF A SAUDI OFFICIAL WAS AN INTERVIEW BY MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND AVIATION PRINCE SULTAN ON AUGUST 27, IN WHICH THE PRINCIPAL THEME WAS THE RESOLUTION OF THE KINGDOM TO DETERMINE ITS OWN DEFENSE REQUIREMENTS AND THE NECESSITY OF ITS FRIENDS TO UNDERSTAND AND RESPOND TO THE KINGDOM'S NEEDS. HE DESCRIBED THE FUSS OVER AWACS AS ONLY PART OF AN ISRAELI-ZIONIST CAMPAIGN TO DENY THE SAUDIS ADVANCED MEANS OF DEFENSE. HE ASSERTED THAT SAG WOULD SATISFY ITS NEEDS FROM OTHER SOURCES IF NECESSARY.

3. EDITORIAL COMMENT HAS BEEN SPARSE, CONFINED TO ONLY TWO COMMENTARIES. MAIN THEMES IN BOTH WERE THE INFLUENCE OF THE PRO-ISRAEL LOBBY WORKING TO THE DETRIMENT OF U.S. AND WESTERN INTERESTS, AND THE HOPE THAT THE CONGRESS WILL BE ABLE TO PERCEIVE WHERE U.S. INTERESTS TRULY LIE.

4. ON THE WHOLE, SAUDI PRESS COVERAGE HAS BEEN VERY LOW KEY, PROBABLY A REFLECTION OF THE SAG'S AWARENESS OF THE EXTREME CAUTION NECESSARY AT THIS CRUCIAL TIME. MURPHY